

Attention: Joseph V. Erardi, Jr. Ed.D.

Submitted by:

Bernadette Waterman

On behalf of the Easton Learning Foundation Board

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Narrative Form Response to : “What your board is most pleased with regarding the 2009-2010 school year?”

There were many successes this past school year for the Easton Learning Foundation (ELF) but three come to mind for which we are most pleased, or more appropriately for us, most proud.

The first success we’d like to acknowledge is the receipt of the largest grant request in the Foundation’s history of over \$115,000 from Helen Keller Middle School Principal and Vice Principal, Joan Parker and Sue Kaplan. These leaders applied for a \$115,000 STEM grant to create a state-of-the-art “Engineering & Innovation Lab” where students will design prototypes on individual computers using new and dynamic software and then, go to the workshop tables located in the back of the lab, to drill, sand and assemble the prototypes. The grant request included all the costs to renovate the classroom and to provide the curriculum materials, the furniture, the computers, the SMARTBoard, and the teacher training needed to implement the lab for five years at the middle school. Over 2000 students will benefit from this program. After five years, the school budget is expected to fund the ongoing costs of the lab.

This request makes the ELF board proud because our educators had the courage to ask ELF to fund their dreams, no matter the cost, with the expectation that ELF would be able to fund it. They conveyed with confidence their belief that ELF can fund any dream. That’s something to be proud of.

ELF is also proud of the fundraising success of this past year for the new lab. ELF worked in partnership with the school administrators, the Board of Education and the Superintendent to ensure that this project was both academically and fiscally responsible. The Board of Education approved the curriculum for the lab. The administrators and ELF diligently researched and reviewed the costs of the program. ELF methodically communicated the dream of a new “Engineering & Innovation Lab” to parents and the public. Easton is a small rural town of approximately 7,000 residents, a village store, one blinking traffic light and many agricultural and horse farms. There are very few commercial businesses. In nine months, in one of the worst economic times in our country’s history, the local Easton Learning Foundation raised the \$115,000 needed to fund the vision of the Principal and Assistant Principal.

We are proud that through the uncertain times of the last year, our donors were more determined than ever to enrich the education of children to be more globally competitive. When times were tough, education took precedence and donors invested in ELF and trusted ELF to take action. That’s something to be proud of.

Lastly, we are proud of the diversity of donors in this last school year. To donate \$115,000 in 9 months is amazing. This lab would not have been possible without our donors.

“Which donors?” you may ask.

*Donors who* in one of the worst economies this country has ever seen, donated to the Foundation.

*Donors who* approached their employers, discussed ELF’s mission, and obtained the first ever donation from their company for ELF.

*Donors who* spent hours on their home computer designing ELF mailers or ELF Program Booklets which brought general donations as well as spread the word about ELF grants.

*Donors who* are the “First Responders” to ELF solicitations for volunteers or funds.

*Donors who* are parents and teachers who sat on stage in front of hundreds of residents, answering random ELF Trivia Bee questions wearing things like diapers and bee antennae, or wigs and tennis racquets; to show kids that adults support ELF and value their education.

*Donors who* are parents that emailed ELF asking “How close are you to the fundraising goal, *now*? We want ELF to reach the target.” and then, mailed yet *another* check to ELF.

*Donors who* donated to the new lab in memory of an engineering friend or relative.

*Donors who* saved all their old sports cleats, bats, gloves and bikes to give to the annual ELF sports sale instead of throwing them out as their kids outgrew them.

*Donors who* provided architectural and interior design services for the new lab *pro bono*.

*Donors who* processed their donations through their company matching gift program to double or triple the financial impact of their donation.

*Donors who* are the large corporations who match employee donations to ELF, because they value the charities their employees support.

*Donors who* are friends from out of town, as well as Easton parents, who approached vendors, discussed ELF’s mission and collected exceptional auction items for the ELF Anniversary party.

*Donors who* consulted with ELF at the school on specifications for the new Lab at 7AM before going to work.

*Donors who* are retired, with no children in the schools, and donated to ELF because they believe that the Foundation can make an impact on exposing students to more STEM learning and keep our country competitive.

*Donors who* are parents and educators who donated unique and extraordinary *experiences* for the ELF auction.

*Donors who* are students who sold tickets at the ELF Anniversary party, bagged items at the ELF Sports Tag Sale or sold pizza at the Trivia Bee because they’ve seen ELF grants impact their schools and want to help.

*Donors who* while cashing out at an ELF fundraiser decided to add an additional donation.

*Donors who* don’t have children old enough to go to school yet and still made gorgeous ELF Trivia Bee posters with hand crafted fuzzy bees on them.

*Donors who* donate to ELF regularly via the United Way payroll deduction which allows ELF a steady stream of funds throughout the year.

*Donors who* spent hours at the kitchen table collating ELF fliers when they should’ve been cooking dinner!

*Donors who* are educators who will brainstorm the ways to implement grants with ELF whenever necessary; over breakfast, lunch or even a Long Island ferry ride.

*Donors who* are the grandparents of Easton students, who through their families were inspired to give to ELF.

In the last school year, our administrators had the courage “to dream the big dream” and ask ELF for support. The Easton Learning Foundation had the courage to say, “Yes, we can fund this” and our donors had the courage to invest in ELF because ELF’s mission resonates with a value that’s treasured in our small town- that every child deserves an excellent education. That’s what makes us most proud.



**BEFORE:** The “wood shop” classroom



**AFTER:** The Helen Keller Middle School “Engineering & Innovation Lab”